

S. and W.B. Fitch Depot and Office Building
Abeel Street, on the east side of the
intersection of Davis and Abeel Streets,
on the Rondout Creek at Wilbur
Kingston Vicinity
Ulster County
New York

HABS No. NY-5558

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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY HABS No. N.Y.-5558

S. and W.B. FITCH DEPOT AND OFFICE BUILDING

Location: Abeel Street on the east side of the intersection of Davis and Abeel, on the Rondout Creek at Wilbur, Kingston Vicinity, Ulster County, New York.

Latitude 41° 54' 26" Longitude 74° 00' 12"

Present Owner: Mr. and Mrs. James Berardi.

Present Occupant: Unoccupied.

Present Use: Being remodeled as a residence.

Significance: This is a unique example of a small Victorian office building which exemplified the use of North River bluestone, the industry it served.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: The building was built in 1870.
2. Architect: Since the S. and W.B. Fitch Company had an office in New York City, they may have employed an unknown architect from that city.
3. Original and subsequent owners:

Simeon and William B. Fitch owned much land at Wilbur, some of which they had inherited from their father Ezra Fitch. They were involved in the bluestone business as early as the 1850s.

1877 Simeon Fitch died 3 September 1877
 Heirs: Jane Fitch, his wife, died 18 August 1888
 Reed Fitch, son, died November 1893, unmarried;
 Charlotte Fitch, daughter; Rebecca Tompkins,
 daughter; Anna Hyde, step-daughter

1936 Deed: 1 September 1936, Recorded 12 November 1936
 liber 584, page 538,
 James Hyde, Mary B. Scott, "the only heirs at law
 and distributess of Charlotte Fitch" to Claremont
 Robert Morris.

- 1936 Deed: 24 September 1936, Recorded: 12 November 1936
liber 584, page 536,
Samuel B. Coffin, Tristram Coffin, executors of the
will of Rebecca R. Tompkins to Claremont Robert Morris
- 1936 Deed: 10 November 1936, Recorded: 12 November 1936
liber 584, page 539,
Claremont Robert Morris to Dwyer Lighterage, Incorporated
- 1940 Deed: 26 December 1940, Recorded: 27 December 1940
liber 614, page 493,
Dwyer Lighterage, Incorporated to Rondout Shipyard Corporation
- 1954 Deed: 17 December 1954, Recorded: 23 December 1954
liber 913, page 18,
Rondout Shipyard Corporation to James Berardi
- 1964 Deed: 19 October 1964, Recorded: 20 October 1964,
liber 1158, page 945,
James Berardi to James Berardi, Alice Berardi, his wife

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Not known.
5. Original plan and construction: A newspaper article in The Daily Freeman dated July 26, 1871, described the building as "of stone, in the modern French style, two stories high with a mansard roof, and is finished inside with elegance, and with special reference to the convenience of the large business transacted."
6. Alterations and additions: Not known.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

The building served as a depot and office for the S. and W.B. Fitch Company. Wagon loads of bluestone were brought there to be shipped out by water. The bluestone business was a major industry in the Kingston area until concrete and modern building techniques made it obsolete. The building was abandoned about the time of the first World War and remained so until the 1972 renovations.

Simeon and William B. Fitch were one of the largest bluestone dealers in the area. Simeon Fitch died in 1877 and his brother William ran the company until his death about ten years later. Ezra Fitch, a son of William B. Fitch, was one of the partners who established the famous New York Company, Abercrombie and Fitch.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old views: A photocopy of a photograph taken in the 1960s shows the building before the 1972 restoration. The view is of west (front) facade. Included in the HABS collection.

2. Bibliography:

a. Primary and unpublished sources:

Deeds, County Clerk's Office, Ulster County Office Building, Kingston, New York.

Hasbrouck, Katharine, paper on Fitch family, in possession of James Berardi.

Interview with Francis Dunne, long-time resident of Wilbur, Kingston Vicinity, New York.

b. Secondary and published sources:

Sylvester, Nathaniel Bartlett. History of Ulster County, New York. Philadelphia, 1880

Directories of Kingston and Rondout, 1866, 1869-87, collection of the Senate House Museum, Kingston, New York.

Newspaper articles, The Daily Freeman, Kingston, New York, March 8, 1867, July 20, 1870, July 26, 1871

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This is a unique example of a small Victorian office building which exemplified the use of North River bluestone, the industry it served.
2. Condition of fabric: The building is in poor condition but it is undergoing renovation which will preserve exterior.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: This rectangular building is approximately 25' (three-bay front) x 35' - 6" in plan and is two stories with a tower.
2. Foundation: The building sits on a stone foundation.

3. Wall construction, finish and color: The walls are sandstone (local bluestone) in dressed ashlar with heavy voussoirs that have horizontal rustication.
4. Structural system, framing: Stone bearing walls support the building. The building has a truss roof.
5. Porches: None.
6. Chimneys: There were originally two chimneys on the east (rear) facade. These have been removed and the flues are filled with brick.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The front entrance projects outward and is a prominent arched masonry opening with a pronounced keystone and is rusticated horizontally. The original door has been removed, however. It was iron, in two leaves, with recessed panels and simulated rivets.
 - b. Windows: The window openings are arched with prominent voussoirs. No windows exist, however. They were originally wooden, single pane double hung type with iron shutters.
8. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: The building has a mansard roof with zinc gutters and ridges. It was slate, with gray and blue-gray colors that formed a diamond pattern. There was a wrought iron cresting along the topmost curb of the roof. The slate and iron cresting have been completely removed.
 - b. Dormers, cupola: There are two gabled dormers on the front and one in the center bay of either side. The conical cupola with a flag pole defines the entrance-way and is set on a octagonal drum.

C. Description of Interior:

The building was inaccessible at the time the survey was being conducted by the Historic American Buildings Survey.

D. Site:

The building faces northwest on the Rondout Creek in Wilbur, in the

vicinity of Kingston. It is located on Abeel Street near the
junction of Davis Street.

Prepared by: William C. Badger
Historian
Historic American Buildings Survey
Summer 1972

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) under joint sponsorship of the National Park Service and the Kingston Historic Landmarks Preservation Commission with financial assistance from the New York Council on the Arts. Measured and drawn during the summer of 1972 under the direction of John Poppeliers, chief of HABS and under the supervision of Roy Eugene Graham (University of Texas at Austin) by student architects Philip D. Ward (University of Washington), A. Carol Boerder (University of Texas at Austin), M. Morgan Gick (University of Notre Dame), and Stephen O. Fildes (Texas Tech University). The drawings were edited in December 1972 by architect John Burns. The written architectural and historical data was prepared by William C. Badger (University of Pennsylvania), the project historian, and edited in January 1980 by Susan McCown, a historian in the HABS office. The photos were taken in August 1973 by Jack E. Boucher of HABS staff.